

VIA FAX

The Honorable Michael Powell
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

April 8, 2004

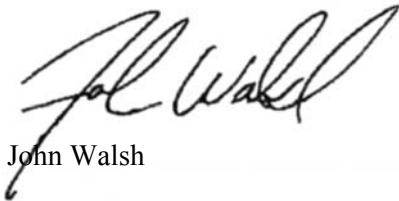
Re: Docket **02-55** – In the Matter of Improving Public Safety Communications in the 800 MHz Band

Dear Chairman Powell,

I want to thank you again for your time on March 3 discussing my concerns about public safety radio interference. As you know, I stand squarely behind the needs of our nation's police officers, fire fighters, EMS personnel and other public safety workers. It is clear to me that we must eliminate interference at its root by separating cellular communications from public safety. All too often change and reform is driven, or at least accelerated, by disaster. This is one of those rare instances where we can actually avert a disaster before it happens.

I know that the rebanding issue is full of complexities which are technical, political and competitive in nature. I am confident that you, your commissioners, and the FCC staff will be able to lead the development of the best possible plan to eliminate public safety radio interference and do what's right for first responders and the communities they protect..

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Walsh", written in a cursive style.

John Walsh

enclosures

CC:

Secretary Marlene H. Dortch
Commissioner Kathleen Q. Abernathy
Commissioner Michael J. Copps
Commissioner Kevin J. Martin
Commissioner Jonathan S. Adelstein

COPY OF JOHN WALSH'S LETTER TO CONGRESS

April 8, 2004

For more than twenty years I have had the honor of standing up for justice in America. One of my greatest allies has been the lawmakers on Capitol Hill. It's been a privilege working with you on causes that have changed our world for the better. For that I am extremely grateful.

Now I write to you seeking justice for America's public safety officials. It's a matter that could affect any one of us – or our families. In 33 states and the District of Columbia, police, firefighters and EMS professionals experience radio interference every day – compromising their ability do their job effectively and protect the communities they serve.

The interference is caused by the intermingling of cellular operations with public safety communications systems in the 800 MHz spectrum band. The bottom line is – when first responders can't reliably make or receive emergency calls, you and your community are at risk. But the greatest risk may be to first responders. Can you imagine a wounded police unable to call for backup because his radio won't work?

As the host of America's Most Wanted and as an advocate for victims, I have had the honor of standing beside law enforcement and other first responders. Without these brave souls there would be little hope for justice, or even social order. How can we stand by and not do something for them?

It's critical to eliminate interference at its root by separating cellular communications from public safety. I join public safety leaders in supporting a proposal before the FCC, known as the "Consensus Plan." The plan was proposed by private-wireless entities, including Nextel, and is supported by public safety organizations including, the International Association of Fire Chiefs, the International Association of Chiefs of Police, and the Association of Public-Safety Communications Officials. It does not require any taxpayer dollars or government input because it is privately funded.

On Saturday, January 31, I highlighted the dangers of radio interference on my program, *America's Most Wanted*. As a result, more than 3500 citizens from around the country wrote to the FCC and their representatives in Congress. We'll be running an update this Saturday – April 10.

Today's Washington Post reports that sources inside the FCC indicate a majority of commissioners favor a plan to separate the public safety frequencies from cellular frequencies. But I fear that competitive interests may try to delay the FCC's process in any way they can; we need to remain focused on doing what's right for first responders and the people they protect.

The 132 abducted children recovered through the AMBER Alert program are a testament to the power – and necessity – of quick, seamless and coordinated communications. Please don't let this opportunity pass us by – our first responders deserve better than that. Stand up with public safety and support rebanding now – before a tragedy occurs.

Kind regards,

John Walsh